

Opening comments

- Good afternoon. Chairman Foster, Chairman Kowall, and members of the committees, on behalf of the Detroit Regional Chamber and MICHauto, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify today. My name is Rob Luce, I am program manager of MICHauto, which is an economic development initiative of the Detroit Regional Chamber.
- Michigan is fortunate to be the home of many leading automotive groups and associations, but MICHauto is the only such entity devoted exclusively to promoting the automotive industry in Michigan. Excellent organizations such as the Center of Automotive Research and the Original Equipment Manufacturers Association – groups that we are very pleased to call our friends and partners – advocate or serve as research entities for the entire global automotive industry. They are based in Michigan, but they work across the globe. MICHauto is transparently biased – we are focused exclusively on promoting Michigan as the birthplace and epicenter of the global automotive industry
- As such, the mission of MICHauto is to promote, retain, and grow the automotive industry in Michigan. We accomplish this mission by providing a platform for automotive stakeholders in Michigan to collaborate on automotive matters related to economic development. Specifically, we focus on four pillars:

- Awareness: Ensuring that our fellow Michiganders continue to understand and appreciate the importance of the entire automotive supply chain to Michigan's prosperity and growth. With the ups and downs the industry has experienced in this state, sometimes people forget that the automotive industry is growing ~~strongly globally~~ ^{again} ~~and represents~~ ^{that it's} one of the most technically advanced and complex industries on the planet – and MICHauto seeks to fill that void.
- Advocacy: Despite the fact that Michigan is known as the automotive state, the automotive industry ~~does not speak~~ ^{has spoken} with one voice to our state political leadership. There is a clear need for automotive industry ^{leadership officials} ~~and the elected leadership~~ in Michigan to understand each other better – and MICHauto seeks to fill that void.
- Business attraction: We have seen other states, especially our friends ~~from the~~ ^{in the south} ~~southern states~~, gain more and more ~~of the new~~ automotive investment dollars. While it started with manufacturing, other states are now seeing greater success in attracting more R & D automotive-related investment. Clearly, Michigan is the leader in automotive investment, but if we want to maintain our leadership for the next generation, we will need to be much more focused and dedicated to retaining and attracting automotive investment in Michigan – and MICHauto seeks to fill that void.

- Talent attraction: The automotive industry is in a war for talent. Companies like Nissan, Ford and Magna have to compete with tech companies like Google or Yahoo for the best and brightest engineering, design, marketing and business skills – and the auto industry has a bit of an image problem. Unlike when today's baby boomers or gen-x'ers were growing up, cars seems less central to the lives of young people and they seem more inclined to want to work for a smart phone manufacture or take a job on one of the coasts, than they are interested in working for an auto company in the heartland of America – and MICHauto seeks to fill that void.
- The basic concept of MICHauto, an industry cluster association focused on a key statewide industry, is not new. MICHauto was initially founded by a volunteer group of industry leaders about six years ago, and was absorbed by the Detroit Regional Chamber when Sandy Baruah joined us as our new CEO, fresh off his experience in Washington dealing with the automotive issues of 2008 and 2009.
- MICHauto is also similar to other industry cluster groups such as MICHbio in our shared goal to use a critical and growing industry to advance our state's economic fortunes. ^{Lastly} And finally, MICHauto is a response to organizations established in ~~our~~ competing states to advance their automotive industries, groups such as the Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, and Tennessee Automotive Manufacturers Associations, ^{as well as} and the South Carolina Automotive Council.

- After two years in the Chamber's portfolio, I am pleased to report that MICHauto has 60-plus companies supporting the program...two of which you'll hear from today – Magna and Nissan. Our program has been fully integrated into the Chamber's signature initiatives, including the regional economic development program and the Mackinac Policy Conference.
- As I said, MICHauto is a platform for stakeholders to collaborate – and collaboration is a central principle. As I mentioned, we are pleased to actively partner with the CAR and OSEA, but our collaboration also extends to groups such as Business Leaders for Michigan, where MICHauto supports BLM's "Mobility" pillar, and of course the MEDC.
- We are proud that MICHauto has earned the MEDC's "Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval" and ~~has~~ been a close partner – we jointly support each other. From an economic development standpoint, MICHauto has been honored to assist with the Governor's international business development travels, providing automotive target prospects for the Governor's team to visit with. We also partnered with the MEDC in creating the ~~first~~ ^{states seminar} marketing piece (*hold up MIA report*) for use statewide promoting Michigan's automotive industry. This awarding-winning document – featuring the "Pure Michigan" logo and welcome by the Governor – is used by our team, the MEDC and others in business attraction efforts and has been translated into several languages.